

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped pass a bipartisan Farm Bill that will strengthen American agriculture, help families facing high food costs and makes a substantial commitment to land conservation and energy independence. Officially titled the Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act, the legislation passed the House by a vote of 318 -- 106.

"American families who are struggling with rising food prices need all the help they can get," said Hinchey. "The new Farm Bill will help those families address rising costs while assisting our nation's farmers to ensure that the American food supply is as vibrant and healthy as possible."

Nearly three-fourths of the Farm Bill will support nutrition programs that help 38 million American families afford healthy food. The legislation's updates to the food stamp provisions will help about 11 million people by 2012. The bill also provides much-needed support to emergency feeding organizations, such as food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens by increasing The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) funding by \$1.25 billion – with \$50 million for immediate shortages at food pantries. Additionally, the bill helps schools provide healthy snacks to students, with \$1 billion for free fresh fruits and vegetables.

"I am particularly proud to have been able to support provisions in this bill that will directly benefit New York State farmers and the district I represent," said Hinchey. "For the first time in the history of farm policy, the bill contains provisions that will help specialty crop producers in New York. This will allow apple, potato, and other niche crop growers to improve their ability to compete in domestic and international markets. In addition, the Farm Bill will continue the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program, which is so essential to New York State dairy farmers. The program will be funded at increased levels with an added cost of production level so our New York State dairy farmers get a fair cut."

Under the bill, farmers will play a greater role in fueling our energy independence. The Farm Bill invests \$1 billion in renewable energy focusing on new technologies and new sources. It takes another critical step in transitioning biofuels beyond corn to non-food crops and sources such as switchgrass, woodchips and corn stalks.

To encourage conservation efforts, the Farm Bill boosts conservation programs that reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters by \$7.9 million.

Finally, the legislation also begins to end payments to farmers who don't need the help, with the most significant reforms in over 30 years. The Farm Bill reduces direct farm payments by \$300 million and cuts federal payments to crop insurance companies that are making windfall profits due to higher crop prices by \$5.7 billion.